



Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Tony Evers, Governor | Mary M. Kolar, Secretary

October 9, 2020

Dear Members, Friends, and Family:

Thank you all for the support and encouragement you are giving us as we all work hard to serve the Members who live at our Wisconsin Veterans Homes. I would like to update you on a few things happening on our campuses in addition to providing information about COVID-19 cases.

We get a lot of questions about the no-visitors policy we enacted due to the threat of COVID-19. We agree with you that Members need to have personal interaction with their loved ones. However, we had to weigh that with the risk of bringing a dangerous virus into our Home environment. We did much research and reviewed the guidance of public health experts and we have crafted a Safe Visits plan for each of our campuses. However, to allow visitors, we must not have any staff or Members with COVID-19 in our facility for 14 days. Each campus will implement its plan as it meets this requirement. Once visitors are permissible at your Home, you will be notified about how to schedule your safe visit.

We have also heard your concerns about staff. We believe we have the best, most dedicated staff in long-term care. We see the care and dedication they have for serving our Members every day. Unfortunately, many staff are contracting the virus. To help ensure we still provide a high level of care, we have requested and received additional nursing staff from staffing agencies and the US Department of Veterans Affairs. In August, we had USDVA staff at Union Grove for several weeks and just today we welcomed USDVA nurses to our King campus.

We are beginning to see people who tested positive for the coronavirus begin to recover.

- At Chippewa Falls, we had one Member and three staff recover from COVID-19 in the last week. There is currently one Member with the coronavirus.
- At King, we are beginning to see both staff (9) and Members (4) recover. Unfortunately, we still have many people with COVID-19 on our campus. Today, we have 33 Members and 28 staff at King with COVID-19 and several more exhibiting symptoms.
- At Union Grove, we have one staff person who has nearly completed their quarantine and no Members tested positive during our last round of testing.

Finally, you will begin to see some additional changes in the days to come. We are finding ways to operate more efficiently given all the new testing and other requirements we have due to COVID-19. First, we are bringing in automated kiosks for daily screening of staff (and visitors when the time comes). This will free up the staff who have been performing the screening to help elsewhere and it will make shift changes much smoother. We are also working on bringing in contracted staff to perform all staff testing. Due to the high rate of community spread, our staff are required to be tested more frequently than they were earlier this year. Again, this change will help us operate more efficiently and we are looking forward to the help.

I would like to close by sharing with you an article written by a Wisconsin combat veteran who served in Vietnam who is also a retired health care professional. To read online, go to www.WisVets.com and click on the article in the News section titled, "[Vern Larson: Help Protect Wisconsin Veterans from COVID-19](#)." Please heed his words and do what you can to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Diane Lynch
Homes Division Administrator